

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
SY-05 MCT-01 OPR-02 AID-05 PC-01 /077 W
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R 092150Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7294
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA
USCINCSO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 1166

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, ES
SUBJECT: MARCH 12 ELECTIONS FOR NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND MAYORS

1. ESTIMATED 70-80 PERCENT OF EL SALVADOR'S 1,800,000 REGISTERED VOTERS (PRIMARILY MOTIVATED BY FEAR OF REPRISALS IF CEDULA NOT STAMPED AT POLLS AS LAW REQUIRES) WILL GO TO POLLS SUNDAY, MARCH 12 TO ELECT 54 MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AND 263 MAYORS. RESULTS ARE FOREGONE CONCLUSION WITH GOES OFFICIAL PARTY, PART OF NATIONAL CONCILIATION (PCN), TAKING AS MANY ASSEMBLY SEATS AND MAYORSHIPS AS THEY SO DESIRE WITH PROBABLE ALLOCATION OF A FEW DEPUTIES AND UNIMPORTANT MAYORS TO TOKEN RIGHTIST OPPOSITION SALVADORAN POPULAR PARTY (PPS). PCN HAS PAID FOR REASONABLY EXTENSIVE MEDIA COVERAGE FOR THEIR PARTY AND CANDIDATES DURING PAST TWO WEEKS. PPS CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN ON VERY MODEST SCALE.

2. ALL GOES SECURITY FORCES HAVE BEEN PLACED ON STATE OF ALERT (NO LEAVE AND CONFINED TO BARRACKS) UNTIL AFTER ELECTIONS. SECURITY SATURATION COVERAGE OF
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POLLING AREAS AND POSSIBLE AREAS OF DEMONSTRATION ATTEMPTS ARE PLANNED BY GOES, WHICH APPEARS DETERMINED AND PREPARED TO PREVENT DISTURBANCES ON MARCH 12.

3. SECRETARY-GENERAL OF LARGEST LEGAL OPPOSITION GROUP, CHRSTIAN DEMOCRATS (WHO ARE NOT PARITICIPATING IN E ECTION), STATED TO EMBOFF THAT LEGITIMATE OPPOSITION (UNO COALITION)

WILL URGE VOTERS TO BOYCOTT ELECTIONS BUT HAVE GIVEN VERY LITTLE PUBLICITY TO THIS EFFORT AND DO NOT FEEL IT WILL BE NOTICEABLY SUCCESSFUL. OPPOSITION PARTIES, HE SAID, WILL NOT CALL FOR DEMONSTRATION ON MARCH 12 SINCE GOES TOO WELL-PREPARED AND WOULD ONLY UNNECESSARILY ENDANGER LIVES OF THEIR MEMBERS. ONLY FIRM PLANS OF PROTEST PLANNED (OR ADMITTED) BY NO IS TO PRESENT THEIR CASE OF FRAUDULENT, MEANINGLESS ELECTIONS TO MEMBERS OF INTERNATIONAL PRESS AND HOPE TO DISCREDIT GOES IN THIS FASHION.

4. LEFISTIST FORCES INCLUDING POPULAR REVOLUTIONARY BLOC (BPR), FPL AND ERP HAVE NOT PUBLICIZED ANY CALL FOR DEMONSTRATION OR OTHER ATTEMPT TO IMPEDE OR DISRUPT ELECTIONS. GOES SECURITY FORCES AND EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE NO INFORMATION THAT LEFIST GROUPS WILL UNDERTAKE ANY MAJOR EFFORT TO HOLD DEMONSTRATION OR OTHER FORM OF DISTURBANCE MARCH 12. THIS MAY WELL BE DUE TO COMPLETE FAILURE OF ATTEMPTED DEMONSTRATION BY BPR ON FEBRUARY 28 (SEE SAN SALVADOR 1004) AND WELL PUBLICIZED PERPARATIONS OF GOES SECURITY FORCES. THIS, HOWEVER, DOES NOT PRECLUDE SPECTACULAR ATTEMPT BY SMALL GROUP OF TERRORISTS TO GAIN PUBLICITY AND CREATE DIVERSION THROUGH HIGH-LEVEL KIDNAPPING, ASSASSINATION OR BOMBING EFFORTS. ALSO, SECRECY OF ANY PLANS, RATHER THAN PUBLICITY, MAY BE A TACTIC.

5. ELECTION CAMPAIGNING ENDED UNDER ELECTION LAWS MIDNIGHT MARCH 8. GOES WILL CARRY UP-TO-DATE RESULTS OF ELCTION ON NATIONWIDE NETWORK OF 26 RADIO STATIONS.
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6. COMMENT. STRICTLY PRO FORMA ELECTIONS OF MARCH 12 BEING VIEWED BY GENERAL PUBLIC AS WASTE OF TIME. ONLY QUESTIONS AS TO ELECTION RESULTS WILL BE HOW MANY, IF ANY, SEATS PCN ALLOCATES TO PPS AND IF BOYCOTT EFFORTS SHOW ANY SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON TOTAL VOTE. MAJOR AREA OF CONCERN WOULD BE EFFORT BY LEFT TO STAGE SOME FORM OF SPECTACULAR AND VIOLENT DIVERSION.
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